

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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Cleek And His Forty Faces; or

T. W. Hanshew, a Dime Novelist who made good

By J. Randolph Cox



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES NO. 159 HIGHWAY NOVELS

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Cleek And His Forty Faces; or

T. W. Hanshew, a Dime Novelist who made good

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It is strange that Cleek with his many faces would not assume at least one that Narkom did not know. His guise as Captain Burbage in the early stories was known only to Narkom, but that was abandoned when the Apaches dynamited the house in Clarges Street that had served as his haven.

The unusual sight of a Scotland Yard Superintendent in a gaudy red limousine is remarked on by Cleek once when he suggests that Narkom get a new car. The old one, he says, is too conspicuous. He often has his cover blown by being seen riding in that car (to say nothing of the sight of it parked outside the Clarges Street house). Narkom replaces it with a bright blue one.

Cleek is supposed to be the ablest man at the Yard (it is surprising he isn't made a superintendent, but he was ever humble), yet he manages to blunder consistently. Entering General Raynor's room in *The Riddle of the Night* as the butler he asks about the General's dinner. Too late he discovers he has not used the servants' entrance and that the General is already eating. Cleek escapes quickly to his own room, changing his face on the run. The aristocrat in Cleek has not been completely erased by years of low-living. It would also seem that the Hanshews had a sense of humor.

For the sake of drama and excitement in the story, and to add suspense, Cleek sometimes is allowed to let his mind stray from his current identity long enough to forget what part he is playing. In *The Riddle of the Spinning Wheel* he is carrying a young woman over his shoulder across the lawn and forgets to keep his voice disguised. Needless to say, he drops his burden and takes to his heels. Not that running is any certain means of escape; he also has a penchant for tripping over loose rocks at the wrong moment.

But Narkom still thinks Cleek is the Yard's greatest asset and Dollops idolizes him (even though he sometimes thinks Cleek isn't following the right suspect). Dollops arrives in the chronicles with a bath bun in one hand and a bundle of brown paper (his "patent tickle tootsies") under the other arm. This dubious invention involves hindering the flight of a suspect by placing glued sheets of paper in the probable path of the hapless man.

Ailsa Lorne waits patiently for Cleek to marry her (ever since he first demonstrated his "birth-gift" to her) and is probably still waiting. They are within days of the wedding once, when Cleek is called to Paris on a case. Ailsa soon learns that she can never depend on Cleek being where or whom she leaves him. She can be counted on to introduce him correctly, as the occasion demands. "This is Lieutenant Deland." "I'd like you to meet George Headland." This is more than Narkom is capable of. He regularly addresses him as "Cl . . . I mean, Mr. Headland."

At the end of *The Riddle of the Mysterious Light*, in an epilogue, "The Passing of Cleek," there is some hint the marriage is finally to take place.

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Cleek has tricked Margot, Queen of the Apaches, into believing him dead, killed by her bullet while he sat in the red limousine (returned for this scene). A corpse disguised as Cleek (an interesting switch) is buried with proper ceremony while Margot dances with glee in a prison cell and the party of Cleek, Ailsa, Dollops, and Mrs. Narkom (as chaperone) rests in faraway Cornwall.

But it is not to last. Cleek is to return to life, more mysterious than ever, to solve a Scottish riddle (*The Riddle of the Spinning Wheel*) as though he has never been away. It is all reminiscent of that earlier disappearance between the events of Cleek, the Man of the Forty Faces and Cleek of Scotland Yard; even then Mr. Narkom found him. Two years after "The Passing of Cleek" he is called in to solve another missing jewel case and Margot is once again on his trail. This is the novel called *The Riddle of the Amber Ship*.

It is only to be expected of a man who goes about revealing his identities so freely. Since he proclaims himself as Cleek at the close of nearly every case (with a ritual snapping on of the handcuffs) it is surprising that all England does not know his name and one or more of his faces.

Melodramatic, absurd, incredible; all of these can properly describe the Cleek chronicles. That they are remembered at all today is due as much to the recollections of John Dickson Carr and Ellery Queen (both of whom have had a kind word to say of them) as to their popularity in an earlier day. All sources for information on the stories and their author can be traced back to Carr and Queen.

At the core of many of the stories are some ingenious ideas that one would expect Carr and Queen to appreciate: a nine-fingered skeleton, a person who vanishes before witnesses, disappearing jewels and statues, a telltale tattoo that can only be removed at the expense of an arm, footprints both inhuman and inexplicable, and a strange substance known as "devil's dust."

Read in sequence as the books were published, their plots reveal a development in structure. *The Riddle of the Frozen Flames* is much more unified and competently written than *The Riddle of the Night*. The same holds true for the last books when compared to earlier titles. Only in *The Riddle of the Mysterious Light* is there a return to basic melodrama and careless writing.

Clues in the chronicles may be traditional: pellets of prussic acid are found to be similar to fragments in the mouth of the victim; footprints outside a window match only one man's shoes; and a scrap of gray tweed may be found hanging on a bush. But no matter; they fit the period.

There is a certain over-abundance of exotic foreign elements (Hindu, Chinese, mystics, and famous jewels from distant lands) as well as a too heavy reliance on the "moonstone motif" in which the famous jewels are sought not only by the local thieves, but by a priesthood desiring to return them to the head of the jungle idol. Cleek always opts for returning the jewels to that idol.

The plots of two of the novels (*The Riddle of the Purple Emperor* and *The Riddle of the Amber Ship*) are very similar, even to the names of the villainous suspects, spelled Gunga Dal in one and Gungha Dall in the other). But this does not really spoil the fun. One need only suspend disbelief high enough.

If you look closely, there are some revealing comments on law and order in Edwardian England: "Will you wake up, England (says Cleek in *The Riddle of the Night*) Will you wake up and do justice by these men who give their lives that you may sleep in peace, and who, with a badge and a truncheon and two willing hands, must fight your criminal classes and keep law and order for you?" And it is Mr. Narkom who grumbles that "it's one of the infernal drawbacks of British justice that a crook's word's as good as an officer's if it's not refuted by actual proof." (Cleek of Scotland Yard.)

On the whole, the chronicles of Cleek are excellent examples of that sort of romantic detective fiction, inspired by Conan Doyle, and imitated in the dime novel, that bridged the years from Victoria's reign until the coming of Agatha Christie. We shall not see its like again.

The Chronicles of Cleek

- THE MAN OF THE FORTY FACES** — London: Cassell 1910
 (The Affair of the Man Who Called Himself Hamilton Cleek, The Problem of the Red Crawl, The Riddle of the Sacred Son, The Caliph's Daughter, The Riddle of the Ninth Finger, The Wizard's Belt, The Riddle of the 5.28, The Lion's Smile, The Mystery of the Steel Room, The Riddle of the Siva Stones, The Divided House, The Riddle of the Rainbow Pearl)
- as **CLEEK, THE MASTER DETECTIVE** — Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page 1918
- CLEEK, THE MAN OF THE FORTY FACES** — London: Cassell 1913
 (Episodic novel version of the above. See Appendix for further details)
- CLEEK OF SCOTLAND YARD** — London: Cassell 1914
 NY: Doubleday, Page 1914
 (Episodic novel: Prologue; The Affair of the Man Who Vanished; seven short stories divided as follows: Chapters 1-5, 6-10, 11-14, 15-19, 20-23, 26-31, 33-38; Epilogue: The Affair of the Man Who Was Found. Chapters 24-25, 32 are linking chapters with the Maurerian theme)
- THE RIDDLE OF THE NIGHT** — NY: Doubleday, Page 1915
 (Being the record of a singular adventure of that remarkable detective genius, Hamilton Cleek, The Man of the Forty Faces, once known to the police as "The Vanishing Cracksmen")
- CLEEK'S GREATEST RIDDLES** — London: Simpkin, Marshall Hamilton, Kent 1916
- as **CLEEK'S GOVERNMENT CASES** — NY: Doubleday, Page 1917
 (Episodic novel: Eight stories and an epilogue divided as follows: Chapters 2-4, 5-8, 9-11, 12-14, 15-17, 18-21, 22-24, 25-27. Chapter 1 is a prologue, chapters 28-29 an epilogue. See EQMM (July 1948) for "Murder in an Empty House" which reprints chapters 9-11)
- THE RIDDLE OF THE PURPLE EMPEROR** — London: Simpkin, Marshall Hamilton, Kent 1918
 NY: Doubleday, Page 1919
 (There are slight textual differences between the two editions, by Thomas W. and Mary E. Hanshew)
- THE RIDDLE OF THE FROZEN FLAME** — NY: Doubleday, Page 1920
- as **THE FROZEN FLAMES** — London: (publisher and date not known), (By Mary E. and Thomas W. Hanshew)
- THE RIDDLE OF THE MYSTERIOUS LIGHT** — NY: Doubleday, Page 1921
 (Episodic novel: Title novelette and 6 short stories with prologue, epilogue, interludes, divided as follows: prologue in chapters 1-2, novelette, 3-16, short stories: 17-19, 20, 22-24, 25-27, 28, 29-31; interlude on the Apache theme in chapter 21; epilogue in chapter 32)
- THE RIDDLE OF THE SPINNING WHEEL** — NY: Doubleday, Page 1922
- as **THE HOUSE OF DISCORD** — London: Hutchinson 1922
 (Slight textual differences between the two editions)

- THE RIDDLE OF THE AMBER SHIP** — NY: Doubleday, Page 1924
 as **THE AMBER JUNK** — London: Hutchinson 1924
THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN KEYS — London: Hutchinson 1925
 (Being the record of a further exploit in the career of Hamilton
 Cleek, detective)

Uncollected Chronicles of Cleek

According to Ellery Queen (EQMM, August 1951, pp 104-105) there were three series of short stories about Cleek in *Short Stories* magazine. Queen lists eight of the possible 19 titles.

- THE CHRONICLES OF CLEEK** 1913-1914
 9 stories including "The Riddle of the Lost Hotel"
THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF CLEEK 1915-1916
 4 stories including "The Riddle of the Globes of Darkness"; "The Riddle of the Scarlet Monk"; "The Riddle of the Stones of Flame"
THE FURTHER EXPLOITS OF HAMILTON CLEEK 1919-1920
 6 stories including "The Riddle of the Purple Blinds"; "The Riddle of the Painted Shrine" (see Chapter 20 in *The Riddle of the Mysterious Light*); "The Riddle of the Amber Chow"; "The Riddle of the Silver Death" (see EQMM for August 1951)

Appendix

A Textual Comparison Between the Early Chronicles of Cleek

THE MAN OF THE FORTY FACES	CLEEK, THE MAN OF THE FORTY FACES
CLEEK, THE MASTER DETECTIVE	Prologue: The Affair of the Man Who Called Himself Hamilton Cleek
Chapter I: The Affair of the Man Who Called Himself Hamilton Cleek	Chapters vi-ix
Chapter II: The Problem of the Red Crawl	Chapters xix-xxiii
Chapter III: The Riddle of the Sacred Son	Chapters xxvii-xxix
Chapter IV: The Caliph's Daughter	Chapters iii-v
Chapter V: The Riddle of the Ninth Finger	Chapters xxiv-xxvi
Chapter VI: The Wizard's Belt	Chapters xvi-xviii
Chapter VII: The Riddle of the 5:28	Chapters xi-xiv
Chapter VIII: The Lion's Smile	
Chapter IX: The Mystery of the Steel Room	
Chapter X: The Riddle of the Siva Stones	
Chapter XI: The Divided House	
Chapter XII: The Riddle of the Rainbow Pearl	Epilogue: The Affair of the Man Who Had Been Called Hamilton Cleek

In *THE MAN OF THE FORTY FACES* the chapters bear the number without the word "chapter"; in *CLEEK, THE MASTER DETECTIVE* they are designated as chapters. Along with the bridging material in chapters i-ii, x, xv, which give the illusion of a novel consisting of several episodes, *CLEEK, THE MAN OF THE FORTY FACES* contains one new story in chapters xxx-xxxv.

YOU'VE TOLD WHOPPERS— Ever Read One?

By Walter H. McIntosh

Did you ever look up the word "whopper" to see whence it came? I tried many references to see when it originated in the connotation of the title of this article, because of a boy's book I have, "John Whopper—The Newsboy" published at Boston by Roberts Bros. in 1871 (copyright date 1870). No author is given, and this I would like to know.

The story itself is what we today would call a "whopper," or tall tale, because it tells the story of a newsboy who lived in Roxbury (just outside of Boston) and delivered papers in the adjoining town of Jamaica Plain, who on a certain day took a short cut across fields to his route, and had a terrible accident befall him!

It seems as he cut across lots he came to a rocky place covered with shrubs and small trees, lost his balance, and suddenly felt himself sliding down the side of a smooth steep rock into a hole some five or six feet in diameter, which seemed to have no bottom. Unable to stop himself, he found himself plunging feet first into dark space below, faster and faster, at times brushing the side of the hole, in an almost breathless fall into nowhere.

It's a great yarn, that kids of that date must have read with great relish. John Whopper, as you may have guessed, popped out the other side of the world, near Canton, China; walked into town, and sold his armful of papers at \$5.00 a piece, to the eager merchant seamen of that port—papers published that very day in Boston; it goes on to tell of his setting up a very profitable little business for a while, until he made a mistake and got caught in the center of the earth—how he got out of that mess I'll leave you to find out when you get a copy of the book.

But getting back to the origin of the word whopper in this context the only other reference I can find is a quote from a book "My Schoolboy

Friend" by A. R. Hope, also published in 1870, "he thinks its better to get a licking than to tell a whopper." A few years later in Harper's Magazine, Vol. LXXII, page 213 appears "But he hardly deserves mercy, having told whoppers." Much earlier in Capt. Marryat's "Frank Mildmay," the term was used to describe something large, as it still is, "There is a whopper that's after us."

So this book intrigues me in two ways: who was its author and what is the earliest use of the word "whopper" in describing a tall tale? Anyone able to help me?

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Eli A. Messier

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Golden Days	24	15
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Good News	8	203
Good News	10	238, 257
Good News	11	277
Half Holiday	1 thru 8 incl.	
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Young Sports of America		1, 11, 22
Klondike Kit		Any
Happy Days	Any issue containing episode of a serial about World War I such as issues dated Oct. 17, 1914; Nov. 28, 1914, Apr. 24, 1915	

DAVID KANARR

1032 14th St.

Bellingham, Wash. 98°25

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Eddie:

Members and readers may be interested in the results of a recent book auction conducted by Plandome Book Auctions of Glen Head, N. Y. This particular sale took place on March 8, with both mail bids and "on the floor" bids accepted. There was a large selection of "books about books, bibliographies, etc." which are of interest to the more knowing book collectors. Some results were:

Ralph D. Gardner's "Horatio Alger, or the American Hero Era," first edition in dust jacket, almost mint, \$27.50.

Frank Gruber's "Horatio Alger, Jr.: A Biography & Bibliography, etc." 1961, limited edition of 750 copies, very good copy, \$17.00.

Jacob Blanck's "Harry Costlemon—Boy's Own Author," 1941, 1st ed., limited to 750 copies, very good condition, \$17.50.

Jacob Blanck's "Peter Parley to Penrod," 1938 1st ed., limited to 500 copies, very good, \$55.00.

Carl J. Weber's "A Bibliography of Jacob Abbott, etc.," 1948 1st edition, \$40.00.

Judith St. John's "The Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books 1566-1910," 1958, 3000 early books described, very good to fine, \$32.00.

Monica Kieffer's "American Children Through Their Books," 1948, dust jacket, good, \$15.00.

From the above you can see that bibliographies are worthwhile collecting, both from a reference standpoint and also monetary appreciation.

—Walter H. McIntosh
Box 393, Salem, N.H. 03079

FOR SALE

Merriwell stories in Tip Top Weekly. Early and late numbers. Send want list; too many to catalog. Good condition and reasonable prices. Also WANTED: in nice condition, Nick Carter stories in Magnet and New Magnet Library and Merriwell stories in Medal and New Medal Library and Merriwell series.

GUINON

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Back numbers Reckless Ralph's Dime Novel Roundup (quite a few reprints, can't be helped). Don't have the complete set of No. 1 to 237 inclusive, but almost, lacking only a few numbers. 10c each or \$21.00 postpaid. Have at least 230 numbers or more. Also two indexes, 1 Pioneer and Scouts of the Old West, Birthday number. War Library list and Dime Novel Catalog.

Ralph F. Cummings

161 Pleasant St., So. Grafton, Mass.
01560

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

310. George Collins, 20 Belmont St., Aberdeen AB1, 1JH Scotland (new add.)
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363. Claude Held, P. O. Box 140, Buffalo, N. Y. 14225 (new member)
177. American Book Collector. 1434 S. Yale Ave., Arlington Heights, Ill. 60005 (new address)

FOR SALE

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McKee's PRICE GUIDE TO CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, 1970 (rarer books, \$5 and up, much on illustrators such as Wyeth, Pyle, Greenaway, etc.) ----- \$7.50

W. H. McINTOSH

P. O. Box 393

SALEM, N. H. 03079

NEWS NOTES

Articles by Clarence M. Fink on old bottles and early vanity publications appeared in *THE ANTIQUES JOURNAL* for March 1973. Clarence is also a collector of dime novels and writes regularly for *Real West Magazine*.

The Tutter Bugle is set to return in a new format. Write to Tutter Bugle, 4645 Vincent Ave. So., Minneapolis, Minn. 55410 for a subscription. Price is only \$2.00 per year. The Tutter Bugle specializes in the works of Leo Edwards.

Silas Snobden's Office Boy, published by Doubleday at \$5.95 is enjoying a brisk sale. The book has been reviewed in at least 60 newspapers and magazines around the country. Of special interest is the Foreword

by Ralph Gardner. Reading an Alger book today without an introduction to set the mood and the times of the original publication would be flat, indeed. This is no reflection on Alger, but a reflection on the times in which we live.

OLD PULP MAGAZINES WANTED

and for sale, such as Doc Savage, Shadow, Spider, Phantom, Western Story, Wild West, G-8, Wings, science fiction, "spicy" mags and many others in the all-fiction field. Must be in excellent condition. What have you? Send list and price wanted.

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Nick Carter Weekly: 26 to 50, 200 to 280, 400, 445, 456, 461, 462, 463, 464, 485, 486, 489, 490, 504, 512, 516, 529, 530, 533 to 538, 644, 645, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 802, 803, 804, 814, 815.

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Pluck and Luck: 34, 72, 74, 100, 139, 140, 145, 166, 167, 177, 184, 187, 192, 193, 197, 198, 202, 206, 210, 214, 216, 218, 222, 226, 227, 231, 232, 237, 242, 245, 250, 254, 258, 262, 265, 266, 270, 274, 277, 278, 282, 304, 317, 339, 350, 354, 362, 371, 388, 413, 414, 424, 437, 449, 480, 483, 487, 488, 502, 503, 520, 524, 526, 537, 542, 557, 559, 562, 571, 576, 585, 586, 587, 595, 599, 606, 608, 624, 629, 639, 640, 652, 655, 656, 658, 662, 673, 683, 687, 729, 749, 752, 757, 761, 765, 785, 789, 792, 796, 802, 807, 808, 810, 817, 823, 825, 834, 839, 845, 849, 856, 874.

Capt. E. P. D. La Touche

CMR, Box 377, Hill AFB, Utah 84403